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*Dublin Grand Opera Society*

*Winter Season*

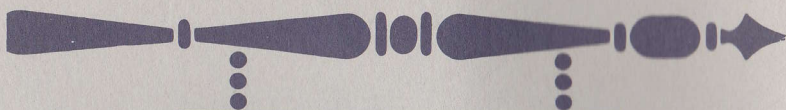
28th November to 10th December, 1983

at the

Gaiety Theatre, Dublin

*Lohengrin*





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# LOHENGRIN

Opera in Three Acts

Libretto and Music by  
Richard Wagner

(Property of Breitkopf und Härtel)

## Characters in order of appearance

HERALD ..... BRIAN DONLAN  
KING HENRY I *of Germany* ..... AURIO TOMICICH  
FRIEDRICH VON TELRAMUND, *a noble of Brabant* .... ANTONIN SVORC  
ELSA, *daughter of the late Duke of Brabant* ..... TIZIANA SOJAT  
LOHENGRIN, *knight of the Grail* ..... RUGGERO OROFINO  
ORTRUD, *a sorceress, wife of Telramund* ..... PAULINE TINSLEY

*Saxon and Brabantian nobles and retainers, ladies, pages, etc.*

CONDUCTOR ..... NAPOLEONE ANNOVAZZI  
PRODUCER ..... MLADEN SABLIC  
DESIGNER ..... PATRICK MURRAY

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Assistant Stage Director: Josephine Scanlon

Scenery built by Cork Opera House and painted by Patrick Murray  
Costumes by S. B. Watts, Manchester

THERE WILL BE TWO INTERVALS OF FIFTEEN MINUTES EACH  
A WARNING BELL WILL RING FIVE MINUTES AND THREE MINUTES  
PRIOR TO THE END OF EACH INTERVAL.

Lohengrin received its Première at the Court Theatre,  
Weimar on 28th August, 1850



# LOHENGRIN

Time: First half of the tenth century.  
Place: Antwerp.

## ACT I

A plain on the banks of the Scheldt.

By the banks of the Scheldt, a herald calls the people of Brabant to arms. King Henry explains that before going to war against the Hungarian barbarians, he wishes to resolve the disunion evident in Brabant itself. He calls on Telramund, to give an account of the dispute.

Telramund tells the king that he was left in charge of the late duke's children when the duke died. One day the son, Gottfried, disappeared when alone with his sister, Elsa; Telramund now accuses Elsa of having killed her brother so as to have the dukedom for herself. Consequently he resigned his previous claim to her hand, marrying Ortrud instead, through whose noble descent he now claims to be ruler of Brabant. The king sends for Elsa, determined to find out the truth and pass judgement. Elsa can give no clear answer to the king's questions, but she relates a dream, to everyone's mystification, in which a knight in shining armour appeared as her champion. The king rules that the matter shall be decided by combat between Telramund and any man who will act as Elsa's champion.

At the king's command the herald calls upon such a man to step forth. Twice the proclamation is read out. Then, as Elsa and the attendant ladies kneel in prayer, the crowd is astonished to see a swan appear on the river, drawing a boat in which there is a knight in silver armour. All greet him (except Telramund and Ortrud). He asks Elsa if he may act as her champion, but imposes the condition that she must never ask him his name or his origin.

Lohengrin (for it is he) steps forward and challenges Telramund. The two men fight; Lohengrin defeats Telramund but spares his life.

## ACT II

The Citadel of Antwerp.

Telramund and Ortrud are musing on their defeat. Telramund blames his disgrace on the evil machinations of his wife, who is a sorceress. She tells him that the power of the victorious knight can only be overcome if Elsa can be induced to ask about his name and origins.

Elsa appears on the balcony of the Kemenate (the women's dwelling), singing of her happiness. Ortrud sends Telramund away and calls to Elsa. Elsa enters and tells Ortrud she forgives her and promises to try to restore her and Telramund to favour; Ortrud cunningly sows in Elsa's mind the seeds of doubt about her champion.

They go off and Telramund enters and conceals himself. The nobles and retainers arrive. A herald announces that Telramund is banished and that the mysterious knight (Lohengrin) shall marry Elsa.

Four pages announce the arrival of Elsa. As she is about to enter the cathedral Ortrud intervenes, saying angrily that Elsa occupies her

(Ortrud's) rightful place. She taunts Elsa for not knowing her lover's name. Elsa, astonished, replies that she has entire trust in him. Lohengrin arrives with the king and comforts Elsa, but now Telramund boldly presents himself. At first all refuse to listen, but Telramund demands of Lohengrin that he disclose his identity, for otherwise he may be suspected of having his origins in evil magic.

Lohengrin contemptuously refuses to answer. Only Elsa can compel him to speak, he says.

Interval

## ACT III

Scene 1: The Bridal Chamber

To the strains of the wedding march, Elsa is led in by the ladies and Lohengrin by the king and nobles, and the couple are soon left alone together. They sing tenderly of their love; but when Lohengrin calls Elsa by her name she is sad at not being able to answer with his, and asks if she may know it. He begs her not to ask, but she presses him more and more impetuously — saying she foresees the day when the swan will come again and Lohengrin will leave her.

At the climax of her demand, the door is flung open and Telramund enters. With a single blow, Lohengrin kills him. He tells Elsa that their happiness is over, and summons ladies to lead her into the king's presence, where he will disclose his identity to all.

Scene 2: The plain on the Scheldt

The king and nobles assemble. They are preparing to march off to war. The nobles enter bearing Telramund's body, followed by Elsa, in mournful mood, and a train of ladies. Finally Lohengrin enters. He tells the king that he cannot lead the campaign, and that Elsa has broken the vow she made and has demanded to know his name and origins.

He now discloses his secret: he is a knight of the Holy Grail, by name Lohengrin, son of Parsifal; and now that his secret is known his power has departed and he must return. He reproaches Elsa. In despair, she begs him not to leave her. He predicts a glorious victory for the German armies: then the swan appears, drawing an empty boat. He embraces Elsa in a final farewell, handing her his sword, horn and ring to give to her brother Gottfried if he should return.

Suddenly Ortrud steps forward in apparent triumph. She tells Elsa that she had transformed Gottfried into a swan, the swan who now serves Lohengrin; if Lohengrin had been able to stay he would have been able to restore him to human form, but now the opportunity is gone. Lohengrin sinks to his knees in prayer. In response, a white dove appears over his boat, the swan sinks and re-emerges as Gottfried, to Ortrud's rage. The Brabantians bow before Gottfried, who will now rule them. The dove draws the boat away, Lohengrin in it. As Elsa sees him go she falls lifeless into her brother's arms.





## Wilhelm Richard Wagner

Wilhelm Richard Wagner was born at daybreak on May 22, 1813, on the second floor of the House of the Red and White Lion in the Brühl in Leipzig. At that time, Leipzig, with a population of about fifty thousand, was Saxony's most important city and one of the six largest in Germany.

Wagner's father Friedrich was a police clerk, yet was a man of greater substance than his post implied. Described as an "exotic character," he spoke fluent French, had charming manners and was a passionate devotee of the theatre. As a result of his interest in the theatre, he formed a friendship with Ludwig Geyer, actor, portrait painter and poet, and on Friedrich's death, when

Richard was just six months old, Geyer married his beautiful widow Johanna just nine months later.

There has been much supposition that Geyer may have been Wagner's real father, as Johanna gave birth to a daughter Cäcilie six months after their marriage and so one could assume that they had been lovers for some time. Wagner adored his mother. She inspired and sustained him all through her life and he paid tribute to her in both Siegfried and Parsifal. Her father, Johann Gottliebpädz, was a master baker from Weissenfels, her mother the daughter of a tanner. Johanna always claimed "gentle birth" and it is interesting to note that she attended one of Leipzig's most select schools, her education being paid for by a mysterious nobleman. So this petite and pretty woman who bore Friedrich nine children and Geyer one, exercised considerable influence on her brilliant son. Warm, sensuous and good humoured, with Geyer — whether he was Wagner's actual father or not, he was the only father Richard ever knew — she provided a loving home and happy childhood, something he wished so desperately for himself in later life, and which he ultimately found with Cosima, his second wife and mother of his children.

Wagner moved to Dresden when just a year old, grew up and was educated there. As a small boy he would wander about the theatre watching his step-father design costumes and paint scenery, so it was inevitable that the theatre would exert a powerful influence on a child with such imagination. In his own words he described how he felt as he moved among the stage properties and mingled with the actors "*lifted from the dull reality of everyday life to the blissful regions of the spirit. Everything connected with a theatrical performance had a mysterious intoxicating attraction for me*". So strong were the impressions made on the intense imaginative boy that, when asleep, the furniture and pictures came to life and his nightmares were so real that he would awake screaming and hated to be left alone.

At this time, a regular visitor to the house was Carl Maria von Weber who had also moved to Dresden, the founder of modern German Romantic Opera. When in 1821 Weber's *Der Freischütz* took Germany by storm, the eight year old Wagner was so captivated that when Weber would call to the house, the child would tremble with excitement. It was also the year that Geyer died.

In 1822, he was admitted to the Dresden Kreuzschule and spent the next five years there. Here he fell under the spell of his father's friend, E. T. A. Hoffman, whose peculiar blend of realism and grotesque fantasy left an abiding influence. When he was about fourteen or fifteen, he heard an inspiring performance of Beethoven's *Fidelio* and *Ninth Symphony* and for the first time decided to become a composer, and so began a disciplined study.



The full score of *Die Feen* was completed in 1833 but not performed in Wagner's lifetime. In 1842, on October 20, *Rienzi* was given in Dresden and had marvellous success but Wagner's fame did not travel abroad until *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*.

*Lohengrin* dubbed a "romantic opera" by Wagner, is a fairy-tale. At the heart of this legend is the story of the swan knight, one of these fairy-tale themes symbolizing the ineradicable dream of rescue from adversity by some miracle. In his *Deutsche Mythologie* which Wagner read, Jacob Grimm wrote: "*The medieval literature of the Lower Rhineland and Low Countries is full of similar legends of the sleeping youth in a boat drawn by a swan to a land in need of succour*". The loss of Lohengrin's magic power when forced to reveal his name is another fairy-tale motive with origins in sorcery. In his epic poem *Parzival*, Wolfram von Eschenbach gave the myth a semi-historical setting. Parzival's son and a knight of the Grail, is sent by the Grail to Antwerp to defend the Duchess of Brabant who is having a marriage forced upon her by the Princes of the Province.

The conflict in this truly great music drama is an intellectual one. Elsa gives her word to Lohengrin never to ask his name. This condition laid down by Lohengrin on which her happiness depends is impossible of fulfilment. Elsa agrees to this condition willingly — "*Hoch über alles Zweifels Macht Soll meine Leibe Stehn!*" "*My love shall prove beyond the reach of all power of doubt*" — but alas, Elsa is only human and Lohengrin is not — he is supernatural. His tragic nature lies in his loneliness — he yearned for woman — the human heart and entered the world of reality and human frailty — and was thus destroyed by wretched human standards. Elsa, however, being human, is unable to suppress her doubts — she is no match for Ortrud or Telramund and as doubt gains ground, all is lost.

*Lohengrin* is a truly great dramatic symphonic work of grand proportion. Beautiful choral passages abound, wonderful character portrayals of Ortrud's odiousness and Lohengrin's idealism. Once introduced to the greatness of Richard Wagner, one becomes engulfed by his genius and by a whole new world of musical experience. One never escaped from this spell — never — never.

Caroline Phelan.




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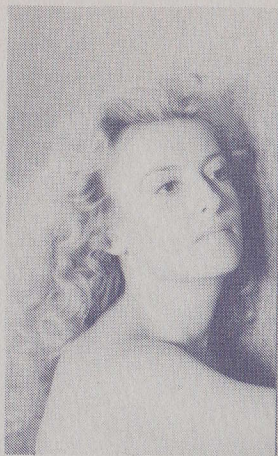
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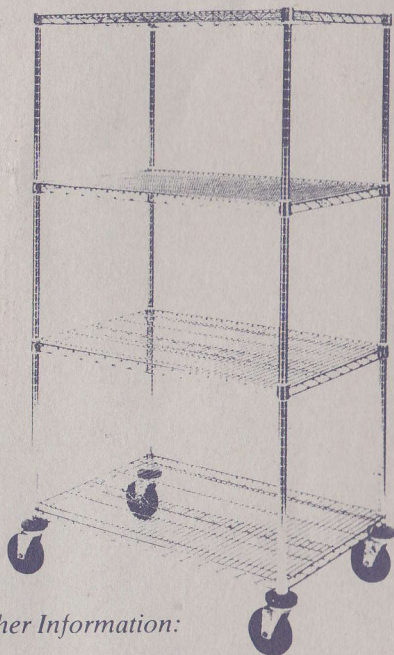
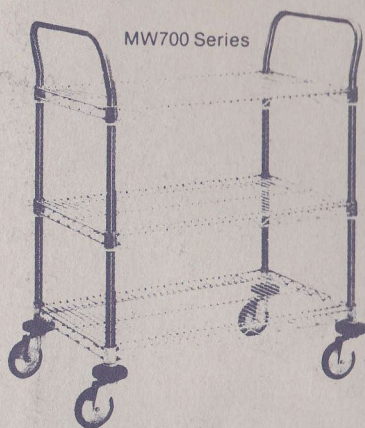
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